



***TO: ALL STAFF***  
***From: Fred Williams, Interim Chancellor***  
***Date: November 30, 2015***

I recently attended the Community College League of California's (CCLC) Annual Convention and I would define the mood there to be one of deep self-reflection. It seems that more and more of us are realizing that the old higher education paradigms aren't working as well as they should, and that a day is rapidly dawning in which our delivery system will have to adapt or cease to be effective. For me, this convention showcased the many ways that community college experts are examining our challenges and opportunities, and how we need to realign our services with what our students really need.

Here are some of my takeaways:

- **Accreditation**—The State Chancellor's Office taskforce findings on accreditation were a hot topic and it looks like several of their recommendations—including researching new models for accreditation as well as evaluating possible accrediting agents—will be implemented. I think this move is significant because by going through this process the Chancellor's Office will have a unique opportunity to reexamine what is truly important in granting an institution the power and authority to bestow an education. The resulting standards might look a lot different than what we operate under today.
- **State of California Address**—Chancellor Bryce Harris gave an incredibly informative and rousing "State of California Address"—his last before he retires this spring. His concentration was on connecting the changing demographics of our students with our essential mission as community colleges. Part of his message was that we need to rely on hard data to inform our decisions. Anecdotal evidence and traditional survey questions will not be enough to institute the type of sweeping changes that education is considering. The gathering of student data needs to be one of our primary functions. Hearing this I vowed to redouble our efforts to secure a District researcher. How can we possibly make District-level decisions when we do not have comprehensive data on all our institutions?

- **Hiring Diverse Faculty**—One of the more eye-opening sessions was “Diversifying Our Faculty: From Conversation to Action,” presented by David Morse and Adrienne Foster from the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges and Thuy Thi Nguyen and Denise Noldon from the California Community College’s Chancellor’s Office. They also relied on data to illustrate the value of a diverse faculty—showing historical numbers on under-represented minority percentages of students versus employees, and the equity spread of the achievement gap. Most interesting to me was the slide that said: “Studies prove the educational benefits of a diverse faculty...closing achievement gaps by 20-50%.” Now I haven’t read the study that was pulled from, but since we’re going to be hiring another 87 full-time faculty in the next year, I certainly think that results like these need to be looked at and discussed. What can NOCCCD be doing proactively to ensure that we’re hiring the most talented and diverse employees that we can? And by diversity I don’t just mean someone’s ethnicity. We need instructors that understand our students: their backgrounds and hardships. It’s all about relating to our students.

- **Pathways to Student Success**—Probably the most provocative of the presentations was the one based on the new book *Redesigning America’s Community Colleges*. The premise is pretty straightforward: administrators and faculty need to move away from the traditional “cafeteria-style model” of education and embrace “guided pathways” which they see as “clearer, more educationally coherent programs of study that simplify students’ choices without limiting their options and that enable them to complete credentials and advance ... more quickly and at less cost.” In other words, reorganize our programs, courses and support services to facilitate student advancement rather than student intake. I was so impressed by the model that these authors propose that I plan to distribute a copy of the book to all of Chancellor’s Staff and every District leader. In doing so, I hope to expand the conversation on how we can enhance student success on our own campuses.

As always, I am thankful to be a part of a District that encourages and supports open dialogue on weighty and important topics like these. The CCLC Convention was a great reminder that while we are all in the business of exchanging ideas, the transaction must go both ways. We must be as open to receiving as we are to giving. I hope we can keep educating each other.

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